

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13 L-03
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8999

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 783

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, EMIN, MNUC, KS, NE

SUBJ: KOREAN URANIUM EXPLORATION PLANS AND INTEREST IN POSSIBLE
NIUE DEPOSITS

REF: (A) STATE 14579, (B) WELLINGTON 291, (C) STATE 14911

1. IN SUPPORT OF PLANNED KOREA ELECTRIC CO (KECO) USE OF
NUCLEAR POWER REACTORS TO GENERATE ELECTRICITY (ONE PLANT
UNDERGOING STARTUP TESTING, TWO PLANTS IN SITE PREPARATION
STAGE, AND SIX 1000 MWE CLASS PLANTS SCHEDULED FOR PURCHASE
WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS) ROK MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND
MINERAL RESOURCES (MER) IS PROMOTING KOREAN PARTICIPATION IN
OVERSEAS JOINT VENTURES INVOLVING URANIUM PROSPECTING AND
MINING.

2. OVERALL MER GOAL IS TO SECURE LONG TERM SUPPLY CONTRACTS
FOR ALL PRIMARY FUELS, ESPECIALLY COAL AND URANIUM. FOCUS OF
URANIUM INITIATIVES IS TO NEGOTIATE PURCHASE OF URANIUM FROM
COMMERCIAL SUPPLIERS IN US, CANADA AND AUSTRALIA AND TO
SEEK JOINT VENTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROSPECTING AND MINING
OF COMMERCIALY USEFUL ORES IN LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA, SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND AFRICA.
MER INTEREST IN POSSIBLE NIUE URANIUM DEPOSITS FITS WITH
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GENERAL INTEREST IN SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE AREAS (AUSTRALIA,
SOUTH AFRICA, PARAGUAY, BRASIL) BETWEEN 20 AND 35 DEGREES
LATITUDE, WHERE A NUMBER OF COMMERCIAL GRADE ORE DEPOSITS
EXIST AND OTHERS ARE EXPECTED TO BE FOUND.

3. TECHNICAL PERSONNEL OF KOREA INSTITUTE OF GEOSCIENCE
AND MINERAL RESOURCES (KIGAM) HAVE NOT STUDIED OR SURVEYED

NIUE DEPOSITS. PRESENTLY, THEY HAVE NO PLANS TO DO SO.
POSSIBLE NIUE-ROKG COOPERATION IN THIS MATTER MAY BE UNDER
CONSIDERATION AT GOVERNMENTAL POLICY LEVEL. PER INSTRUCTION
REFTELS A AND C, WE HAVE NOT SOUGHT TO CONFIRM THIS
OFFICIALLY.

4. MER'S 1978 BUDGET, NOW IN APPROVAL PROCESS BECAUSE OF
NEW MINISTRY STATUS, CALLS FOR FUNDS TO FIELD SEVEN
OVERSEAS EXPLORATION TEAMS.
STERN

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